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An exploration of secondary level instrumental music educators' receptiveness to select philosophical writings

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AN EXPLORATION OF SECONDARY LEVEL
INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC EDUCATORS'
RECEPTIVENESS TO SELECT
PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Music

in

The School of Music

by
Robert Neil Nelson
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ABSTRACT

Prior research suggests the existence of a general divide between educators in the field and scholarly research writings; however, the extent to which this divide extends into writings associated with areas of philosophy and curricular construction has not been thoroughly investigated in the field of music education. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate secondary level music educators' ($N=3$) perceptions of and receptiveness to two journal articles derived from contrasting philosophical stances in music education.

Data collection included a combination of on-site observations to ascertain current teaching practices of participants, completion of a survey designed to measure self-reported willingness to read articles reflecting differing philosophical views, the reading of two subject matter-relevant but philosophically opposed articles, and a personal interview to discuss participants' reactions to the articles and gain deeper understanding of their beliefs. Analysis was conducted through a case study approach in which data related to each participant were considered prior to making cross case comparisons. Themes that emerged from consideration of the data included participants' (a) philosophy and beliefs related to teaching and classroom practices, (b) reactions to the stimulus articles and scholarly writing in general, (c) beliefs related to festivals/competitions, and (d) influential mentors and other individuals. These themes closely aligned with several hypothesized contributing factors derived from a review of the literature, especially factors suggesting a strong adherence to traditional models, a perception of impracticality associated with revisionist teaching methods, and the polarizing nature of the discourse in writings.

INTRODUCTION

Although music has been the subject of philosophical inquiry dating back to Ancient Greece, for a majority of its existence music education lacked an articulated rationale for its purpose. From the time of Plato to the mid-20th century, music was valued for societal benefits such as developing citizenship, improving quality of life, and advocating social values (Mark, 1982). By the mid-twentieth century, music educators such as Allen Britton and Charles Leonard began expanding the notion of music education beyond utilitarian pursuits (Mark, 1996, p. 57) by offering subject-matter focused rationales for music in the schools. The publication of Bennett Reimer's *A Philosophy of Music Education* in 1970 marked a historical point of change by offering the first fully articulated philosophy for music education.

Reimer's philosophy built upon the ideas of Leonard and others by promoting the idea of aesthetic education as music education. He stressed the importance of music education to "enhance learnings related to the distinctive capacity of musical sounds ... to create and share meanings only sounds structured to do so can yield" (Reimer, 2003, p. 11) with a central task to "make musical experience in all its manifestations as widely available to all people, and as richly cultivated for each individual, as possible" (Reimer, 2003, p. 69). One of Reimer's stated goals is "to help students be engaged more thoroughly in the emotional domain of music" (Reimer, 2003, p. 75). Keith Swanwick also promoted aesthetic beliefs in music education by saying "musical experience refers to, and at its most powerful, reformulates the ways in which we feel life" (Swanwick, 1979, p. 54). The aesthetic philosophy gained acceptance by large numbers of the profession as the prevailing philosophy for music education (Mark, 1982, p. 19).

The rise of postmodernism and the questioning of universal truths associated with this type of thought provided an avenue for music educators and philosophers to explore new

ground in music education philosophy. The journal, *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, began publication in 1993 as a forum for philosophical discussions. David Elliott's praxial philosophy *Music Matters* followed in 1995, offering only the second fully articulated philosophical rationale. Elliott's philosophy describes music as a "diverse human practice" (Elliott, 1995, p. 128) and stresses that the aim of music education should be "to enable students to achieve self-growth, self-knowledge, and musical enjoyment by educating their musicianship in balanced relation to musical challenges within selected musical practices" (p. 129). This philosophy rejects the aesthetic notion of the value of musical works as being internal and maintains that students should be taught, "as reflective musical practitioners engaged in music making in general and musical performing in particular" (Elliott, 1995, p. 175). The praxial philosophy rejects aesthetic education as a sound basis for music education.

Other music education philosophers also expressed discontent with prior aesthetic theories, going so far as to characterize them as "increasingly irrelevant to the actual practices and pleasures of music" (Regelski, 2005, p. 226). The widely accepted philosophy of music education as "an education of feeling" (Reimer, 2003, p. 89) that seemed to be predominately accepted within the profession only decades prior was questioned. Instead of bringing music education to consensus related to philosophical matters, Elliott's philosophy launched a new era of debate and discussion which "[was] not limited to the aesthetic/praxial dichotomy" (Mark, 2008, p. 153) and included examinations of general problems facing the profession in terms of focus (Jorgenson, 1997), the impact of informal learning practices in the classroom (Green, 2001; 2008), and music curriculum construction (Bowman, 2002).

Even with all of this emphasis on philosophical debate, Allsup (2010b) notes that performing ensembles in schools have continued along largely without the help of philosophers.

To explore his point, take the average high school band as an example. In essence, one might say that band teaches students about music through the performance of appropriate literature on wind instruments. In countless schools across the country each day, students come to class and are taught fingerings and slide positions, how to read notes and rhythms on the staff, and how to react to symbols and words printed on a page, among other complex skills. These skills are molded by a teacher who assembles the many parts found in the score into a whole, continuously refining the process in the pursuit of recreating the aural vision of the composer. Performing ensembles such as the band publically demonstrate what has been taught in the classroom through a myriad of performances that occur throughout the school year. For the most part, students and parents find this process rewarding, as evidenced by the continued enrollment of students in the band program and continued support by the community to fund these programs. Indeed, it is rare to see a group of community members rallying at the school board meeting demanding for the elimination of music programs in the schools, although the opposite is not uncommon. This example of music curriculum has remarkably held the same throughout the years, from pre-aesthetics to praxial and beyond. Allsup (2010b) writes that:

The educational logic of bands, orchestras, and choirs has never needed a rationale beyond its apparent functionalism. It is a remarkable testament to the utilitarian appeal that these expensive forms of teaching have survived a century of budget swings (p. 50).

My personal background serves as an illustration of these issues. My initial years as a high school band director reflected the “typical” classroom described above. I spent countless hours drilling repertoire in preparation for festivals or other performances. A significant portion of the whiteboard in my classroom was devoted to counting down the days until the next performance. Notes, rhythms, and an allegiance to the score dominated the construction of my rehearsal plans. I was largely unaware of the philosophical debates swirling about in the

literature during this time; however, I always wondered whether there was something else that was missing from my teaching as all this emphasis on the next performance never seemed to create the inspired level of music making I was searching for. Slowly, I began changing my approach. I erased the countdown clock on my whiteboard and replaced it with reflective questions for my students to answer. While our performance schedule remained largely unchanged, the time in the classroom I devoted to teaching performance repertoire was reduced as student-centered activities such as chamber ensembles and student composition projects became more common. While I felt that I was teaching in a new and different way, it was not until I arrived at graduate school that I discovered a large body of literature devoted to these issues and began to critically examine what I valued in terms of a music education philosophy.

It could be argued that descriptions of what is taught in performing ensembles are actually discussions related to curriculum and not philosophy. While curriculum and philosophy might seem to be independent concepts, in reality, they have a complementary relationship with the philosophical beliefs of a teacher largely driving curricular choices. This is especially evident in the field of music education where teachers have historically had a great deal of latitude in choosing what they teach. While the National Standards for Music Education (MENC, 1994) proclaim nine content standards that every child should be challenged to reach in music, the teacher still has ultimate authority to determine how, when, and to what extent the standards are implemented through choices of repertoire and methodology. A report by the MENC Task Force on National Standards specifically mentions this freedom of choice by local districts and classroom teachers as a necessary component of successful implementation of the nine content standards (Hoffer, Lehman, Lindeman, Reimer, Schuler, & Straub, 2007).

In music curriculums in particular, what factors influence the curricular decisions made by teachers? A historical lens is perhaps useful in this regard. In the earliest days of the singing schools in Boston, choral music instruction was valued for its capacity to improve singing in the church and teach positive social values (Mark, 2008, p. 13). The addition of bands in school curriculums across America in the early 20th century filled a need as a service organization to school activities such as commencement exercises or athletic teams (Fonder, 2009; Mark, 2008). This influx of band programs in schools occurred soon after the conclusion of World War I when many military bandleaders returned home and transferred their musical expertise to civilian life by finding jobs as school music teachers (Mark, 2008, p. 125). It is logical to assume that these former military bandleaders carried the values of tradition and discipline so valued by the military into their new classrooms.

As music programs became more established in schools, many calls for change were made. In 1963, the Yale Seminar on Music Education criticized music educators' emphasis on performance rather than the aesthetic impact of great musical works (Mark, 2008, p. 144). The Juilliard Repertory Project followed in 1964 with the purpose of researching and collecting high quality music for teaching purposes. However, these efforts were not well received by the profession and had little influence on music education practices (Mark, 1996, p. 37). Other events such as the Tanglewood Symposium, the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project, and the Comprehensive Musicianship Project made similar declarations and calls for change within the profession; however, school performing ensembles have largely continued along in a traditional manner (Allsup, 2010b).

Tradition is a powerful aspect of human culture. Philosophers and sociologists have regularly expressed fears in how adherence to tradition can create beliefs so powerful that they

seem completely natural and therefore difficult to examine critically (Allsup, 2010a; Bourdieu, 1994). While a band director's calendar loaded with marching band performances, school concerts, and district level festivals might appear to be a natural part of the job, does it have to be this way? Is it possible that some "realities" of music education are in fact perpetuated habits? Allsup (2010a) contends that:

Schools, music programs, and marching bands are entirely humanly constructed. Yet, when asked to think critically about a topic that seems obvious or permanent, like an end-of-year concert or an all-state audition, notions of the 'real world' are invoked to defend practices that seem as natural as the rising of the sun (p. 217-218).

All of this leads to a poignant question; is tradition a bad thing in and of itself? Perhaps not. Certainly, one need look no further than the performance stage at the Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic each December to see that adherence to traditional models can lead to high-profile performances, tremendous opportunities for student musicians, and the attainment of performance objectives. Why would anybody question that?

There has been a growing interest in philosophical journals to do just that by questioning the nature of school performing ensembles. As a result, lines have been drawn between traditional and revisionist ways of thinking about music education in the schools. For the sake of clarity, these two terms will be used consistently throughout this document. McCarthy (2009) defines a traditional teaching philosophy in music as one that adheres to "technically high standards, [with] emphasis on product, dominance of competition, hierarchies and structures similar to professional ensembles, and ranking and ratings that classify and evaluate individuals and groups" (p. 32). Jorgenson (1997) considers such methods as "teacher-directed" (p. 12) and emphasizing "a hierarchical rather than egalitarian interrelationship between teacher and student" (p. 12).

A revisionist philosophy, however, reflects just the opposite. In this philosophy “the lived experience of students takes center stage” (Barrett, 2005, p. 23). Revisionist teachers “challenge the unquestioned assumptions, stultified attitudes, and irrelevant practices of the passé and the status quo” (Jorgensen, 2003, p. 125) in a manner that they believe makes the study of music more relevant by emphasizing its social and cultural contexts (Regelski, 2009). These revisionists often question the nature of tradition in school ensembles, sometimes in sharp and terse terms, and regard the extensive emphasis on group performance as limiting to the development of independent musicianship. Revisionists often characterize the large ensemble curriculum as being narrow in focus with an inordinate amount of time spent emphasizing technical skills usually specific to individual instruments (Regelski, 2009) as opposed to developing truly independent and comprehensive musicianship (Johnson, 2009). Revisionists believe that this emphasis on group performance results in a performance-and-notation skills paradigm where true musical comprehension is limited and few students continue music making activities beyond their high school experience (Williams, 2007). Additionally, revisionists call for the teacher’s role as the sole provider of knowledge to be diminished (Floyd, 2009) with an emphasis placed on engaging the individual student. Such notions as “mutual learning” with students being given more control over the process (Allsup, 2003) and teaching in a manner consistent with how popular musicians learn (Green, 2008) are common themes.

Although a great deal of writing and advocating about revisionist constructions of the music curriculum exists in journals and other publications, my own personal experience leads me to believe that traditional teaching methods remain dominant. Standing vividly in my mind is a recent conversation with a colleague, a thirty year band teaching veteran, who accused me

of being in an “ivory tower for too long” as I talked with him about revisionist ideas found in the philosophical literature. It is unlikely that he is alone in holding such a view. Although passionate debates continue in scholarly philosophical journals, the degree to which secondary level teachers currently in the field view this debate as important is unknown. However, if history is any guide, the minimal impact made by prior calls for change in teaching practices likely reflects a general divide between teachers in the field and those advocating for change.

This divide between theory and practice has previously been documented in the research literature through examining the reading preferences of teachers. In a survey of music teachers and graduate music majors, Byo (1991) investigated the overall willingness of subjects to read research articles from both formal (e.g., *Journal of Research in Music Education*) and more informal publications (e.g., *Music Educators Journal*). He found that readers were more likely to select articles related to their field of music (band, strings, choir, etc.) regardless of the formal or informal tone of the publication. Byo stressed the importance of making personal transfers based on research results and finding ways to make that information useful at the individual level. In a study specifically examining the feelings of 39 in-service music educators towards experimental research writings, Hedden (1979) found that only 27 percent of respondents felt that music research reports typically were concerned with real world problems and only 28 percent believed that articles in research journals were relevant to teachers. In an essay on this same topic, Brand (1984) theorized, “there has been a failure of both the researcher and the teacher to understand one another and to foster positive and cooperative relationships” (p. 2).

This general trend also has been found internationally. Brand (2006) discussed the question “does music education research matter?” with Hong Kong graduate students in music

education. Responses indicated a belief that research is difficult to generalize and unrelated to music classrooms and rehearsals. Although the studies presented here are more focused on quantitative research as opposed to philosophical inquiry, if one assumes a disconnect between teachers and research-based articles in general, the results of these studies by Hedden, Brand, and Byo may be generalizable to philosophy. However, a complete examination of teachers' receptiveness to various philosophical thoughts is currently lacking in the research.

Jorgensen (2001) presents the elements of theory and practice in education as existing in dialectic, which she describes as an argument involving tension between two elements. In a dialectical view of theory and practice, the teacher must regard these two elements as existing separately while at the same time being interrelated and affecting one another. Neither is more important than the other and the two often lead back and forth between one another. As she describes, "what is required in this approach is that teachers and researchers reflect on the alternatives before them, be they theoretical or practical, and resist prematurely foreclosing one or the other alternative before they make their decisions" (p. 344). It is clear that such an approach can lead to uncertainty and ambiguity on the part of the teacher, characteristics that have long been seen as undesirable in the classroom. Uncertainty leads many people to feel uncomfortable, unorganized, and awkward and potentially translates into a lack of confidence in one's ability to be a competent teacher. Research studies suggest that various characteristics such as confidence, organization, and proper sequencing of instruction are highly valued in determining teacher effectiveness (Kelly, 2008), further lending validity to the belief that ambiguity is not desirable in the classroom. In order to eliminate as much of this ambiguity as possible and to better reflect traits that are desirable, music teachers may routinely accept

particular methodologies as truth and follow them in an unquestioning manner. One might question their willingness to consider alternative methods (Jorgenson, 2001) as a result.

Likely as a detriment to both sides of this conversation, writers tend to place teachers into one of two extreme groups that exist at polar opposites of the spectrum of this discussion. Fonder (2009) provides a framework for this “either/or” perspective using two hypothetical dichotomous band classrooms as an example. The first model is described by him as “efficient, predictable, systematic, self-contained, and stable” (p. 93). The classroom in this description is “maestro-centric” with a uniformity of performance by all individuals as the paramount goal. Festival ratings and other extrinsic motivators usually reinforce this notion of what constitutes band. More muted is the consideration given to the musical interests of the students or how to involve them in the process of musical discovery. The other extreme is described as “noisy, wildly varied, and perhaps a bit messy around the edges” (p. 94). Student interests are at the center of this model with the teacher serving a subordinate role as a facilitator rather than the traditional teacher. Classrooms in this model are often decentralized, collaborative, diverse, and foster independent musicianship (Johnson, 2009) as opposed to collective musical experiences. There is a feeling of ambiguity as specific outcomes are less readily defined.

Bowman (2002) makes a distinction between instruction with educational intent and instruction with the primary concern to train. In the traditional classroom described above, the main focus of the teacher is to train students to perform on their instruments. Students are trained to recognize and respond to symbols, remember finger positions, and perform complicated psychomotor skills in time with other students. The criticism Bowman and other revisionists have with such a scenario is that training provides students with a limited set of skills largely applicable only to the domain through which they were acquired. Bowman

believes “focusing so closely on the musical part of the ‘music education’ equation leads music educators to gloss the educational side, with consequences not just potentially troublesome, but at times highly undesirable” (p. 64).

However, focusing solely on the instructional style with education intent, as described by Bowman, presents its share of problems and shortcomings. In the second classroom example described above, the focus on performance has been almost completely removed and replaced with individual discovery on the part of the students. While this scenario is certainly designed to maximize student involvement, the question that remains to be answered is can students achieve a love for learning about music when musicianship is so poorly defined and the process of obtaining these necessary skills is so unsequenced (Fonder, 2009)? Additionally, one could argue that students taught in such an extreme scenario are acquiring a limited set of skills; in this case, only being able to explore music and not develop these skills to achieve a high level of proficiency on an instrument. Whereas this emphasis on the development of specialized technical skills through formal music instruction is not necessary or important in some cultures or folk music genres, it is absolutely necessary in scenarios where the end goal of instruction is exemplary performance in the classical tradition. Many revisionists express a desire to move away from these traditional models in their writings but the fact remains that these ideas have yet to be embraced to a large degree in school ensembles, making the development of technical skills a necessary component of being able to function in these musical environments.

While discussions on this topic tend to gravitate toward the extremes as described above, the middle ground between these two opposites receives little attention. These distinct ideas of how to structure music curriculums are formulated by the previously described traditional and

revisionist approaches to music education philosophy and curriculum. Although previous empirical and philosophical discourse suggests that a divide exists in theory and practice, little research has been undertaken to thoroughly investigate this phenomenon. Additionally, little research has been completed to formally research the receptiveness of secondary level music educators to philosophical writings representing either of the two perspectives so far mentioned.

The ability of both sides to engage in discourse and freely exchange ideas is an important one. Even if neither side changes their held opinion, simply engaging in dialogue and critically examining the worth of the argument being presented can strengthen each viewpoint and allow each side to better understand their own beliefs and values. Outright rejection seems to be more common and the reasons for this needs analysis. The review of literature, which follows, revealed five factors that may contribute to this divide: (a) strong adherence to tradition; (b) perceived impracticality of educational methods; (c) cognitive dissonance experienced when presented with ideas that conflict with the beliefs of an individual; (d) inaccurate perception of current teaching practices; and (e) the polarizing discourse of the writings. These factors set the context for the present research, the purpose of which was to investigate secondary level instrumental music educators' perceptions of and receptiveness to two journal articles derived from contrasting philosophical stances in music education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Strong Adherence to Tradition

Research suggests that teaching methods stemming from tradition are dominant in ensemble based music classes. Blocher, Greenwood, and Shellahamer (1997) examined the specific teaching behaviors of middle and high school band directors in a rehearsal setting. Of particular interest to the researchers was the amount of time spent demonstrating “conceptual teaching behaviors.” The researchers defined conceptual teaching as “the verbal behaviors of band directors in rehearsal settings by means of which the directors attempt to make students aware of, have an understanding of, and/or be able to transfer any musical concept” (p. 459). This is in contrast to teaching behaviors that focus predominately on instructing students to play their individual parts in an ensemble setting, a description that could be classified as a more traditional approach. Participants included 21 full-time middle and high school band directors. Results showed that teachers engaged in conceptual teaching behaviors for only 3 percent of the rehearsal time, or an average of 32 seconds out of a teaching segment lasting over 19 minutes. The researchers theorized that an inclination to teach as one was taught, the lack of appropriate role models, and the absence of conceptual teaching methodology in music teacher training programs to be contributing factors to this low frequency of conceptual teaching behaviors. The results reveal that the participants in this study relied heavily on traditional teaching methods as opposed to more progressive strategies.

Studies in all areas of education show that researchers are rarely able to document sustained changes in classroom practices of teachers, even after teachers have participated in enhancement programs or professional development experiences (Briscoe, 1991). While theories related to the passivity of most professional development experiences have been

identified by some as a potential reason for this lack of change (Tikunoff & Ward, 1983), the findings of these studies suggest that traditional manners of teaching become ingrained and are hard to change.

As alluded to earlier, the forces of tradition are a powerful aspect of culture and it is quite common for people who have become a part of a certain system to oppose much that represents change. Jorgensen (2003) explained:

Reasons people give for not wanting to see things in a different way or trying out things that haven't been done before often boil down to the force of tradition, and the fact that the status quo is comfortable for, and protects the interests of, those who have been accepted into a social system (p. 40).

Byo (2011) extended this idea one step further by suggesting that tradition is not necessarily the culprit but rather the idea of certainty. People develop allegiance to a model and become so certain of their beliefs within the model's boundaries that they reject ideas that do not match. "Certainty blocks perspective, possibilities, and nuanced understanding" (Byo, 2011, p. 10). The certainty associated with strong adherence to an idea is reflected as early as the undergraduate music education program. "Many students enter college with particular stubborn covert misconceptions of music teaching formulated innocently from home and school" (Byo, 2011, p. 10). This statement is not conjecture on his part. Whether speaking of tradition or certainty, research has indicated that many students enter college with preconceived ideas based on their past musical experiences (Isbell, 2008) and that fieldwork and student teaching experiences do little to change students' views about teaching and learning (Tabacnick & Zeichner, 1984). Although student teacher training experiences may be designed to allow preservice teachers to shape their views related to teaching by working with an accomplished practitioner, research suggests that preservice teachers do not change their

beliefs to become more like their cooperating teachers by the conclusion of the experience (Brand, 1982).

Why are preservice teachers so certain of their beliefs and practices related to teaching prior to entering a classroom? It is entirely possible that influential prior music teachers may have an effect on these students and as a result these students come to college “wanting to ‘become’ their high school band, orchestra, or choral teacher” (Conway, 2002, p. 34). In a large survey supported by the National Executive Board of MENC: The National Association for Music Education, researchers found that undergraduate and graduate students selected their high school music teacher as the most influential person in their decision to become a music education major (Bergee, Coffman, Demorest, Humphreys, & Thornton, 2001). With such a high degree of influence ascribed to their high school ensemble director, it is possible that these students would exhibit many of the teaching techniques used by these teachers as they develop an occupational identity. One can imagine a cyclic pattern emerging in which (a) secondary level teachers influence their current students, (b) these students become secondary level teachers themselves, and (c) these new teachers influence their own students by exhibiting the beliefs they value.

As these models of teaching are consistently reinforced, traditional teaching methods become so ingrained that it is difficult to imagine any other way. Perhaps as a result, the divide between theory and practice is perpetuated as new ways of organizing the band curriculum conflict with preconceived notions of what band is supposed to be. Allsup (2010a) clearly articulates this: “the more obvious and true the situation appears, the more difficult it is to imagine it differently” (p. 218).

Perceived Impracticality of Education Methods

In a profession that already requires lengthy time commitments, even writers advocating for a revisionist approach to teaching instrumental music admit that asking teachers to take additional time to learn and apply new teaching techniques is a challenge. Barrett (2005) writes: “It seems odd to ask music teachers to rethink their approach to the curriculum when these forces [job requirements] demand their already overburdened attention” (p. 21). Lengthy time demands imposed by the profession may be a cause of teacher burnout and attrition (Scheib, 2004).

A great deal of the time demands imposed by the professional are largely attributable to the intense performance schedules maintained by school ensembles. Miles (1993) found that 73 percent of public high school bands gave an excess of 42 performances during the course of the school year, based on a survey of 759 schools representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Motivated by the importance of maintaining a consistent quality level for public performance, band directors likely feel they are unable to devote precious rehearsal time to activities that do not directly contribute to learning performance repertoire.

Even if time were available in the teacher’s schedule, revisionist educational theories and methods presented in scholarly journals often seem far-fetched and not appropriate for school settings if encountered without the proper training to make transfers to individual situations. For example, Fonder (2009) discussed an alternative school in upstate New York that is entirely student-led with students creating the classroom rules and selecting the repertoire that will be learned each year, a concept of program organization highly different from those commonly found in schools. In a similar vein, Allsup (2003) examined the communal music making experiences that occurred when nine band students were allowed to

freely compose using instruments of their choosing. The researcher operated in the role of facilitator as opposed to the traditional teacher as peer learning and peer critique were emphasized. Allsup (2008) continued to advocate for this model by saying, “I have tried to envision a less symphonic bandroom where in addition to large ensemble performances, students rehearse, practice, and compose collectively, like a garage band” (p. 166).

Green (2001, 2008) has done extensive research on how popular musicians learn and has advocated for the inclusion of these informal teaching practices in the music classroom. These visions of how to reorganize the band curriculum stand in direct contrast to many of the lessons and values that have been taught in U.S. schools of music for decades.

Although these approaches might have educative value that the creative music educator could adapt to individual classroom situations, it is more likely that an article with content such as those described above would be immediately discounted if not ignored entirely. It is theorized that a large portion of secondary level music teachers, already pressed for time as previously documented, who encounter such writings would immediately consider the ideas as impractical in the school setting without considering possible transfers to their particular situation.

Cognitive Dissonance

Leon Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance has become one of the most researched in the social psychology literature. As the theory goes, individuals seek consistency within themselves and when presented with ideas inconsistent with held beliefs, the individual will experience psychological discomfort and be motivated to actively reduce the dissonance in order to return to consonance (Festinger, 1962). A higher magnitude of dissonance is experienced when the belief in question is of higher importance to the individual; as a result,

the motivation to reduce the dissonance will also be greater. This theory has elicited much debate within the psychology community since it was first proposed and has fueled a wave of research over the last fifty years as researchers continue to develop and expand upon the original concepts of Festinger's theory (Cooper, 2007).

Festinger listed various ways of reducing cognitive dissonance in a social disagreement situation. Of most importance to this discussion is the theory that dissonance can be reduced by discounting an opposing or alternative view and by doing so, removing one's own view from the dissonant environment. This is commonly achieved by attributing different characteristics, experiences, or motives to the other group (i.e. the "ivory tower" argument) or by rejecting and dismissing them entirely (i.e. the impractical argument) (Festinger, 1962).

In the present context, music educators who are presented with new teaching methods emphasizing curricular options that conflict with previously held beliefs are in position to experience cognitive dissonance. The teacher would be motivated to find a way to alleviate the stress caused by the internal conflict. As decisions about how to teach are extremely personal in nature, the value attached to these beliefs is certainly great. Based on the premise of the theory, this would mean that the potential cognitive dissonance experienced in such a situation would be substantial and greater than one might typically experience.

Festinger postulated that another way individuals avoid the stress of cognitive dissonance is by avoiding situations likely to cause the onset of the discomfort. This idea forms the basis of selective exposure theory, commonly written about in social psychology and mass communications (Spears & Freedman, 1967). Selective exposure theory holds that individuals prefer exposure to stimuli that support their beliefs and attempt to avoid stimuli representing opposing beliefs. If it is true that large numbers of educators who teach in a

traditional manner do not spend large amounts of time reading philosophical research writings, attending conference sessions devoted to curriculum development, or engaging in discussions with colleagues who hold different beliefs, it is possible that this theory could be the cause. Individuals can avoid the dissonance altogether by avoiding these situations if they already are aware that the communication might conflict with their beliefs.

Inaccurate Perception of Current Teaching Practices

Accurate perceptions of teaching/learning situations have proven to be difficult to ascertain by teachers and trained observers in a variety of contexts. Duke (1987) studied the perceptions of 100 musically trained and untrained undergraduate and graduate observers towards an applied music lesson and found significant variability within each group relative to their perceptions of teacher activities (performance, instructions, disapprovals, approvals) and proportions of total lesson time (teacher performance, student performance, teacher talk, student talk). Although one might expect musically trained observers to accurately perceive the events occurring in a teaching situation, the results of this study indicated otherwise. Results suggest that people often have an inaccurate perception of what they are seeing even after receiving specialized training.

Previous research has documented a tendency for teachers and students to give themselves higher ratings during self-evaluation tasks compared to ratings from other observers. Bergee (1992) presented undergraduate music majors with a list of hypothetical situations related to success in teaching and asked them to indicate whether they felt they would achieve or perform better in the stated situation than the average undergraduate. Participants indicated an elevation of themselves over others in 10 of the 11 hypothetical situations. In a similar study, Richards and Killen (1993) found that preservice teachers' perceptions of the difficulties

they would face as first year teachers were all significantly different from their perception of the difficulties the average first year teacher would experience. In short, most preservice teachers believed that teaching would be less difficult for them than for their peers. If such a mindset is carried into a teaching career, it is plausible that the teacher would have little reason to accept new teaching methods, as they perceive themselves as already teaching better than the “average” teacher.

This disconnect between expressed beliefs and demonstrated teaching behaviors has been shown to include philosophy. Kacanek (1982) surveyed Wisconsin music educators and asked them to respond to selected statements from Bennett Reimer’s *A Philosophy of Music Education* by indicating their attitude towards the statement in theory and the perceived value of the statement in actual practice. The study found that participants agreed with major statements of Reimer’s philosophy, but the level of agreement with the statements was higher in theory than the perceived value in practice. In a similar study, Schnoor (2003) examined collegiate band directors’ attitudes towards aesthetic education and found that while participants almost unanimously agreed with the principles of aesthetic education through self-reported survey data, observations showed that on average only 13 percent of actual rehearsal time was devoted to incorporating teaching strategies designed to develop aesthetic awareness and sensitivity. These studies reinforce the idea that teachers often perceive their teaching practices differently than demonstrated through actual classroom interactions.

Polarizing Discourse in Discussion

One need not spend much time reading through some of the writings on this topic to notice a polarizing and sometimes antagonistic tone to the arguments being made. While often made in the context of a larger point, statements written in such a tone could serve to turn-off

an otherwise open-minded reader. Teaching philosophies are very personal in nature, and criticism, even if done so unintentionally, may result in the dismissal of anything the writer has to say. Statements referring to the band rehearsal as “an environment of learned helplessness, of oppressor and oppressed” (Allsup & Benedict, 2008, p.170) and characterizing traditional teaching methods as culprits in teaching students that they are “not good enough, smart enough, or capable enough” (Allsup & Benedict, 2008, p. 170) would likely do little to foster collaborative dialogue with colleagues in the field. Other writers describe a symphony orchestra performance as “a place where middle-class white people can feel safe together” (Small, 1998, p. 42) and the music performed there as originating only “from the mind of a recognized, valued, and now usually also dead, white, male composer” (Johnson, 2009, p. 18). While these quotations have been purposely selected to reflect the point of this argument, the fact remains that they have great potential to incite. Instead of discourse that would lead to the consideration of new ideas, inflammatory language may invoke outright dismissal of thoughts and a lack of motivation to interact with similar material in the future.

Although previous research has suggested a divide existing between theory and practice, very few studies on this topic have been completed. Additionally, I was unable to find existing literature that examines music teachers’ receptivity to various perspectives of philosophy and curriculum construction. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate secondary level music educators’ ($N=3$) perceptions of and receptiveness to two journal articles derived from contrasting philosophical stances in music education. Specific research questions were as follows: (a) What were the perceptions of experienced and successful instrumental music educators regarding two philosophically dichotomous essays related to the construction of the music curriculum? (b) To what extent was participants’ receptiveness to the content of

the essays explained by adherence to traditional methods, perceived impracticality, cognitive dissonance, inaccurate perceptions of current teaching practices, and polarizing discourse in discussion?

METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions, a basic interpretive qualitative study was conducted with three music educators serving as participants. Qualitative research is largely based on the idea that meaning is “socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world,” (Merriam, 2002, p. 3) which makes this mode of inquiry ideal for examining the research questions of this study. Qualitative research often aims at understanding one thing well (Stake, 2010); in this case, the goal was to understand the receptiveness of music educators to examples of subject matter-relevant but philosophically opposed literature. As qualitative research can provide an opportunity to understand a topic or phenomenon in-depth and provide an avenue to uncover meanings people have constructed (Merriam, 2002), it was the most appropriate choice for an investigation of this type. Additionally, teaching philosophies and curriculum choices are of a personal nature and to truly understand a teacher’s beliefs, personal communication and discussion are necessary. This level of personal communication is not achievable through common response-collecting instruments such as Likert scale surveys or forced choice questionnaires if used as the sole means of data collection, further necessitating a qualitative approach.

Various methods of organizing qualitative research exist; however, a basic interpretive qualitative study (Merriam, 2002) is the most appropriate for an investigation of this type. This method is designed to develop understandings about a phenomenon and the perspectives of the people involved. This understanding is achieved through interviews, observations, and document analysis with the resultant data analyzed to find recurring themes in an attempt to answer the research questions.

To gauge music teachers' receptiveness to contrasting writings about music education, one deriving from tradition and the other from revisionist thinking, three instrumental music teachers were selected to provide "information rich" cases for study. In four phases, they (a) taught or rehearsed in the authentic setting, (b) rated their interest in reading articles associated with article titles of traditional and revisionist approaches to music teaching, (c) read two contrasting stimulus articles, and (d) shared their thoughts about receptiveness to the stimulus articles. This ordering of elements was intended to avoid inadvertently priming the participants towards a particular position. I observed the participants while they taught or rehearsed in order to make a record of overt teaching behaviors, examined their receptivity ratings in a survey of article titles, and interviewed each participant about the stimulus articles.

Participants

Exemption from institutional oversight was requested and granted by the LSU Institutional Review Board. The application form with signatures appears in Appendix C. With the assistance of my master's committee, a pool of potential participants was created through a process known as purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling is used to identify some limited number of participants from whom the most information can be learned, thus allowing a phenomenon or topic to be studied in depth.

Potential participants were secondary level instrumental music educators with a majority of their teaching load occurring in a band setting. An effort was made to identify potential participants who have demonstrated successful teaching. For the purposes of this study, successful teaching was defined as having achieved a reputation of excellence through high-quality student performances, frequent attendance and achievement of high ratings at adjudicated music festivals, and demonstration of a professional manner of conduct with

students, parents, and colleagues in instances of personal interaction. The use of these protocols for selecting information-rich cases follows the strategy of intensity sampling, as defined by Patton (2002). Intensity sampling involves selecting information-rich participants that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not to an extreme degree. In the case of this study, the directors selected for study are viewed in a positive manner as successful within the field, but are otherwise not unusual in any differentiating way. It was believed that these teachers would provide the most relevant responses to the inquiries forming the fundamental questions of this study. Potential participants identified through this process were contacted via email and asked to participate. They were also provided a brief summary of the format and goals of the study at this time. This process continued until three teachers agreed to participate.

Observations

Observations of the participants teaching and rehearsing was the first step of data collection. I conducted two observations of each participant during normally scheduled class meetings based upon their availability. The length of each observation was determined by the regular length of the class period being observed; for example, two participants teach in a situation where classes meet for 90 minutes while one participant taught classes of 45 minutes. Multiple observations of each participant were preferred over a single observation to enhance the trustworthiness of the data.

I observed the actions and responses of the teacher and the students during the rehearsals and recorded those observations via fieldnotes to gain a holistic understanding of the atmosphere of the classroom environment. This approach was useful in terms of “capitalizing on intuitive ability to see in depth, to recognize the influence of context, to probe, and to progressively focus” (Stake, 2010, p. 91). As data analysis is an ongoing process in qualitative

research, this loose framework for the observations allowed me the freedom to use my knowledge and experience to understand what was occurring. Although this framework was constructed with the intent of allowing themes to emerge throughout the process, it is acknowledged that the ability to completely eliminate all bias is impossible. However, a conscious effort was made to eliminate as much bias as possible and minimize the effect on the observations.

The Survey

After the second observation, participants completed a survey designed to ascertain their willingness to read articles associated with traditional and revisionist approaches to teaching. The design of this part of the study is a replication of Byo (1991). However, whereas Byo measured self-reported willingness to read subject matter-relevant articles in empirical research journals and trade journals, the present study measured self-reported willingness to read subject matter-relevant articles in philosophical journals and trade journals.

A list of twelve article titles was created. The list included titles that clearly reflected the overall content of the articles so as to avoid ambiguity. Participants were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale their willingness to read the article with a score of five indicating a high likelihood to read the article and a score of one indicating a strong likelihood that the participant would not read the article.

Articles selected for this survey intentionally represented two groups. One group of articles was distinctly philosophical in nature as one might encounter in the journal *Philosophy of Music Education Review*. The other group of articles was predominately from the trade journals *The Instrumentalist* or *School Band & Orchestra*. An effort was made to select articles

that reflected these distinct groups and avoid articles that could be seen as overlapping between groups.

While it could be argued that article titles do not provide enough information for the participant to make an informed choice, their use in this study reflects a real life decision all readers face when browsing through a journal. Readers glance at headlines and titles to identify articles of interest. If the title does not seem particularly relevant or interesting, it is likely that the reader will not read further. In this study, the participant was provided with the title only in an attempt to make the task as realistic as possible.

Survey responses were used to see whether participants would report a greater likelihood to read articles reflecting one grouping over the other or whether a blending of interests was demonstrated. Responses were also useful in answering the first guiding research question of the study related to participant receptivity towards philosophical writings in general. A copy of this survey is included in Appendix A.

Interviews

Observations are useful to record observable behaviors, but as Patton says, “the fact is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions...The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Interviews were used in order to understand the perspectives of the individual participants.

Participants were provided with two stimulus articles at the conclusion of the second observation that they were asked to read in advance of our scheduled interviews. The selected articles were “The Problem of Band: An Inquiry Into the Future of Instrumental Music Education” by Randall Allsup and Cathy Benedict (2008) found in the journal, *Philosophy of*

Music Education Review, and “Why Music? Why Band?” by Tim Lautzenheiser included in the fifth volume of the *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band* series published by GIA Publications (2004). During these individual meetings, participants were asked questions gauging their overall reaction to the articles (the exhibits) they had read. Exhibit questioning is a technique recommended during interviews to direct participants’ focus and provide more detailed responses through examination of a statement, story, or artifact (Stake, 2010). Additional questions exposed the participants to the five hypothesized contributing factors (adherence to traditional methods, perceived impracticality, cognitive dissonance, inaccurate perception of current teaching practices, and polarizing nature of writing style) to understand their beliefs related to those topics.

Interviews were structured utilizing a general interview guide approach (Patton, 2002) in which the questions to be explored were listed, but the interviewer was free to add additional probes and questions in a more conversational style (Patton, 2002). This approach ensures that the same basic lines of inquiry were followed with all participants, but the interviewer remained free to explore additional lines of inquiry to clarify and further understand the personal beliefs that the participants held. A list of questions asked to all participants can be found in Appendix B.

These two articles were selected because they are related to a central theme but represent differing views on the topic. The Allsup and Benedict article is an example of philosophical literature taking a revisionist stance. For example, the authors say that band education is negatively impacted by an “inheritance that is overwhelmed by tradition” (p. 157) and creates “an environment of learned helplessness, of oppressor and oppressed” (p. 170) that does not allow students to develop independent musicianship skills. They disapprove of

teaching methods that are predominately “teacher-centered” and charge the profession to “expand our conceptions of instrumental music” (p. 167) and to expand the curriculum beyond traditional conceptions of band. Although published as one continuous document, this article is based upon the text of a prior presentation made by the authors at a conference session and, as such, contains specific sections that are clearly attributed to the author responsible for their content. This unique format gives each author the ability to communicate his or her specific beliefs within a united general theme.

The Lautzenheiser, on the other hand, is fully supportive of the traditional band model and offers readers suggestions for advocacy related to the various benefits that he associates with its study, both intrinsic and extrinsic. In contrast to Allsup and Benedict, Lautzenheiser believes “participation in band avails the musician to the infinite journey of creative expression” (p. 3). Whereas teacher-centered methods were criticized in the previous article, here these methods are praised for teaching band students “to embrace and support the power of the authority figure and trust that the director’s decisions will be in the best interest of the group” (p.7). Perhaps the most compelling contrast between these two articles resides in how the authors view the effect of band participation. Whereas Allsup and Benedict say that non-transformative band methods create situations in which students are “learning that they are not good enough, smart enough, or capable enough” (p. 170), Lautzenheiser believes “*music creates successful people* (emphasis in original). The ‘learned outcome’ of music study is a certain success blueprint” (p. 11-12).

In order to clearly articulate the differences in the traditionalist/revisionist dichotomy reflected in these two articles, a list of endorsed behaviors and ideas/concepts derived from the articles is provided in Figure 1. It should be noted that, in the construction of these lists, an

Lautzenheiser article (Traditional)

Dominant behaviors include:

- Teacher serves central role
- Teacher makes efficient decisions largely with minimal student input
- More teacher talk than student talk

Dominant ideas/concepts include:

- Foundation of curriculum is musical repertoire
- Mastery of specialized musical performing skills a main goal
- Outcomes are more easily measured and assessed

Allsup & Benedict article (Revisionist)

Dominant behaviors include:

- Teacher serves decentralized role
- Students heavily involved in decisions
- Greater amount of student talk during activities

Dominant ideas/concepts include:

- Less emphasis on performing repertoire
- Surprises in rehearsal are welcomed
- Classroom interactions reflect a collective process between all people (like a garage band)
- Outcomes are less predictable

Figure 1. Elements characterizing the classroom environment derived from Lautzenheiser (2004) and Allsup and Benedict (2008).

effort was made to include behaviors or concepts that are mutually exclusive between the two sides and avoid those that could be seen as important to both. Although these lists were not explicitly used during data analysis, they do make clear the fact that the articles are clearly different and represent different sides in this binary.

Another reason for the selection of these two articles is the clear and relatively brief manner in which the ideas are expressed. It was not anticipated that the reading associated with these articles would require an undue amount of participants' time to complete. The articles were free from technical jargon, which has been identified as a potential deterrent in the reading of scholarly writing (Brand, 1984; Flowers, Gallant, & Single, 1995). It was hoped that the use of two articles representing opposite views would provide participants a framework to classify their own beliefs as agreeing with either of the two articles or by classifying their thoughts as a merger between these two views.

It should be noted that the selection of these two articles does not indicate a belief that these articles are representative of the entire body of literature on this topic or a suggestion that

the entirety of the literature can be easily divided into two distinct groupings. Such a view would be a gross overgeneralization. Rather, these two articles were selected on the basis of their content alone and no attempt at larger generalizations is being made. However, it is my belief that a methodology such as this can contribute to a better understanding of the complexities of the situation involving personal feelings related to philosophical writings and could lead to additional research questions in the future which may lend themselves to larger generalizations.

Interview length varied slightly among the three participants and ranged from 56 minutes to 66 minutes. Notes were taken during the interview to guide my own explorations of the topics and helped create additional probes based on the conversation. In addition, all interviews were recorded using an Olympus LS-10 Linear PCM Recorder. Interviews were transcribed and responses were coded based on the content. An open coding procedure was used in which predefined categories were not created; instead, the transcripts were reviewed line-by-line to identify all possible ideas and themes reflected by the responses in a continual process until larger categories emerged. These emergent themes were then used to organize the information (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Data Analysis

Data were organized in a similar manner to case study approaches commonly found in qualitative research. In doing so, data were organized around the three participants to create descriptions of their backgrounds, their beliefs based on interviews and survey data, and their behaviors as seen in observations. This description process is necessary before cross-case analysis and comparative analysis between participants can be completed (Patton, 2002).

Comparative analysis was used to uncover information, perspective, and insight useful to answer the research questions forming the basis of this study.

Fieldnotes were examined and coded based on the demonstrated behavior or activity and whether it reflected an understanding of traditional or revisionist practices. These were color coded for analytical purposes. Although the lists referenced in Figure 1 were not explicitly used during this phase of analysis, they certainly served as a centralizing means of looking at the data and do reflect my understandings of revisionist/traditionalist beliefs as based on the stimulus.

Interview transcripts were also coded without the use of predefined categories (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). This involved reading each transcript several times and making notes in the margins of main ideas reflected in each statement. A list of these notes was compiled and notes reflecting similarities in some manner were grouped together to form common themes. The themes that emerged from the responses included those related to the participants' (a) philosophy and beliefs related to teaching, (b) reactions to the stimulus articles and scholarly writing in general, (c) beliefs related to festivals/competitions, and (d) influential individuals and mentors. These four categories were color coded to aid in analysis.

The self-selection article surveys were analyzed using simple quantitative procedures to determine the participants' mean ratings for articles reflecting revisionist and traditional practices. Additionally, the survey results were analyzed to identify the articles that received the overall highest and lowest mean scores from the participants.

The combination of on-site observations, interviews with participants, and the completion of the article title survey created the opportunity for triangulation in the evidence that was gathered. This is important as qualitative research relies heavily on the concept of

triangulation for validation (Stake, 2010). Triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods to eliminate vulnerabilities associated with the use of only one method during data collection and also adds credibility by strengthening confidence in the conclusions that are drawn (Patton, 2002). In this instance, the method of triangulation of qualitative data sources was used. This method allows for cross-checking and comparing the consistency of information among methods and among participants. The impact of triangulation methods will be considered in the following section.

After data were organized in an appropriate manner, transcribed interviews were shared with the participants in a process known as member checking. As Stake (2010) explains, “member checking is presenting a draft copy of an observation or interview to the persons providing the information and asking for correction and comment” (p. 126). This served as an additional method of triangulation of data by making sure that I created an accurate representation of what the participant said.

Data collection ended with a total of 3 hours, 3 minutes of recorded interviews, which produced 61 pages of single-spaced typed transcripts for analysis. Live observations of the three participants included a total of 7 hours, 35 minutes of fieldwork described through 47 pages of handwritten fieldnotes.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The four phases of this study occurred as planned: (a) I observed three successful school band directors and their students in regularly scheduled music rehearsals. The band directors each (b) completed a survey intended to gauge their preference for titles of select readings in music education, (c) read two stimulus journal articles in music education, and (d) participated in an interview with me. Observation fieldnotes and interview transcripts were coded and themes were identified for the purpose of answering the questions: (a) What were the perceptions of experienced and successful instrumental music educators regarding two philosophically dichotomous essays related to the construction of the music curriculum? (b) To what extent was participants' receptiveness to the content of the essays explained by adherence to traditional methods, perceived impracticality, cognitive dissonance, inaccurate perceptions of current teaching practices, and polarizing discourse in discussion?

The study was designed to allow the opportunity for triangulation of data sources to occur. This was helpful as the combination of a variety of data collection methods (interview transcripts, completed surveys, observation fieldnotes) gave additional strength to the findings that will be discussed in detail below. In almost all cases, a finding suggested through the information obtained from one data collection method was supported by data obtained through the other means, which is a reflection of the process of triangulation. Exceptions to this were rare and are noted individually in the following discussion.

Additionally, member checking served to strengthen the validity of the data by allowing the participants to make corrections to the interview transcripts in the event that I quoted them incorrectly. When provided with these transcripts, participants suggested no changes in terms of factual attribution. The only suggested correction to an interview transcript was made by a

participant to correct spelling of names and places. This gives additional strength to the belief that I made an accurate representation of what each participant said.

As this study was primarily concerned with people and the individual beliefs that these people held towards music education philosophy, results will be discussed in consideration of each individual participant before making cross case analysis between and among participants. Participant names have been changed to protect their anonymity.

Participant #1: Jeff

Jeff has been a band director at the high school and middle levels for 14 years within the same small geographical region. He holds both a bachelor's and master's degree in music education in addition to National Board certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. He currently serves as the assistant band director at a public high school in the Southern United States where he teaches the second and third bands at the school.

Although Jeff taught predominately in what could be considered a traditional manner (Lautzenheiser, 2004), he reflected more of the revisionist traits during observations than any other participant. He often revealed vulnerability, a behavior associated with some areas of revisionist thought, as revealed in a statement to his students about working hard to reach "next level" performance quality:

Here's the truth, guys. For me as a teacher, it's every bit as hard. Do you know why? Because, I have to think everyday how can I find a new way to say something [to help you understand] ... It's hard for me too.

Jeff also posed questions to the ensemble that forced students to think deeply about the musical concept being explored. He often did this in a manner that exceeded simple repetition of a phrase or word that the students had heard before. For example, after performing a piece of music during rehearsal, Jeff asked the students to reflect on how well they had played the

piece in relation to specific musical concepts. It was obvious that the students had been trained to think on a much deeper level as their responses went beyond the non-specific such as “good” and made mention of specific musical concepts, such as “the balance was better in the middle section.” However, even though Jeff’s teaching strategies represented the most blending between the traditional and revisionist categories, his approach was still firmly reflective of the traditional manner of band directing.

In the survey, Jeff gave high ratings to article titles related to informal learning practices (a revisionist practice) and the title that reflected traditional approaches. He gave the lowest overall mean score for revisionist articles (3.0 on a 5-point scale) of all three participants. It appears that, rather than a blending of interests, Jeff has specific revisionist interests (i.e. informal learning) and is largely disinterested in others. Participant responses to the article title survey are found in Table 1.

When considering the two stimulus articles during our interviews, Jeff had a strong negative reaction towards the revisionist article. This is especially interesting in light of the finding that he demonstrated some tendencies towards revisionist practices in his own teaching. He said, “I was really pretty angry after reading most of it. It felt like a complete slap in the face to people who are working to keep music going in the schools, who are giving it their all.” He continued to say in strong terms that the revisionist authors were trying to advance an agenda to change the way music is taught to reflect a “utopian” view of society. He also noted a disconnect between revisionist writing and the day-to-day workings of school music programs, similar to the findings of Hedden (1979) and Brand (1984) in relation to receptiveness of teachers to experimental research.

Table 1

Participant Responses to Article Preference Survey

Article Title	Jeff	Susan	Alice
1. Rethinking Music: First Steps to a New Philosophy of Music Education	2	3	4
2. Preserving Music Education in the 21 st Century	4	4	3
3. Cultivating Young Directors to Preserve the Profession	5	4	5
4. The Impact of Informal Learning Practices in a Classroom	5	3	3
5. No Wasted Moments: Planning Purposeful Transitions	3	5	5
6. Reflections on Futures for Music Education Philosophy	2	3	4
7. The Rehearsal: Mastery of Music Fundamentals	4	5	5
8. Curriculum Reform: Reclaiming “Music” as Social Praxis	2	4	5
9. Factors Contributing to Junior High Student Success at Solo and Ensemble Festivals	3	3	5
10. Programming the Perfect Concert	3	4	5
11. Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance in the Lived Experiences of Students	3	4	4
12. Exploring the Contexts of Informal Learning	4	3	4

Note: 5-point scale with 5 being a most favorable rating.

The revisionist article had a unique format with clearly delineated sections between the two authors. Jeff found the portions of the revisionist article written by the second author to be especially polarizing. He said, “I think [the] tone was completely antagonistic ... The whole time I was reading this article I felt like I was being talked down to. It was very condescending, and that serves nobody. It completely turned me off.”

This reaction is interesting to note, as Jeff is the only participant of the three to have obtained a graduate degree. It is likely he would have encountered similar revisionist articles during his graduate degree work and, perhaps as a result, would demonstrate more receptiveness towards these ideas. This was not the case, however. The effect of the length of time he spent in the field prior to returning to graduate school (a period of nearly ten years) on his receptiveness was not examined in this study, but could potentially be a factor in need of consideration.

Participant #2: Susan

Susan has been a high school and middle school director in several different geographic areas of the country, having been at her current assignment for the last nine years. She holds a bachelor’s degree in music education and has been teaching for nearly 30 years. She currently serves as the lead band director at a public high school in the Southern United States where she conducts the first band.

Susan’s observations revealed an approach that is highly informed by traditional teaching practices, but at times included activities that reflected student-centered practices and empowered students to make decisions. Her approach to ensemble tuning was completely student-centered with little direction from her as to how the students should adjust pitch in terms of being sharp or flat. While in the case of a younger teacher this might be reflective of a

lack of knowledge as to how to proceed in terms of ensemble intonation, in the case of Susan this was a strategic decision. She said, “I don’t sharp or flat them” and believes that not only does this process give students ownership, but also allows them to recognize tendencies on their instrument in terms of intonation. Additionally, she also relied on students to point out important information to their stand partners with little direction from her during a sight-reading exercise. These practices suggest that while Susan may teach in a traditional manner, she believes that student-centered practices are valuable and incorporates some of these strategies into her teaching when she feels it is appropriate to do so.

There was little evidence of interest in reading articles with titles reflecting revisionist practices as reflected through Susan’s completed article title survey. Susan reflected little blending of interests with four out of the six articles from the revisionist side selected as “I don’t know if I would read this article” (her lowest score selected). This extended into our discussion of the two stimulus articles, with Susan saying that she agreed with many of the points made in the Lautzenheiser article. She said:

That article was much easier to read and much more enjoyable to read. I felt like it had some things where I could bring back to my principal and say, ‘look at this.’ It’s relevant. It’s relevant to what I’m doing right now.

That feeling of relevance was not extended to the revisionist stimulus article. Susan said that she “didn’t get a whole lot out of it” and felt that the overall tone, especially in the sections written by the second author, was negative.

Participant #3: Alice

Alice has taught middle and high school band in both public and private school settings within the same small geographic area for the last 39 years. She holds a bachelor’s degree in

music education. For the last nine years she has served as the lead band director at a large public high school in the Southern United States where she conducts the first band.

Alice's observed behaviors could be characterized as the most traditional of all participants in the study. There were fewer instances of revisionist practice observed when compared to the other participants in the study. A majority of the class consisted of teacher directed instruction as is often seen in traditional models. It should be noted that Alice's 45-minute classes were considerably shorter than the others in the study and potentially affected her decision on how to structure a class. She alluded to this point, saying during the interview that she feels she has to pace her class much faster due to the short length of the class compared to other schools that have 90-minute class periods.

It was difficult to accurately assess Alice's interests reflected through her completed article title survey. She had the highest mean score for revisionist articles (4.0) and also the highest mean score for traditional articles (4.6), which would seem to suggest a blending of article interests. However, when discussing her feelings about music education philosophy articles in general, Alice said these were articles that she was "not going to buy into" and, "I don't read them (philosophical writings). I just don't. I have too many other things that I have to read." There is obvious incongruence between this statement and her responses to the article title survey, which included many philosophical articles. The reason for this incongruence is unclear. It is possible that participants felt a sense of pressure to indicate a greater likelihood to read scholarly literature than is actually the case, although this was not examined in this study.

This incongruence was further noted during interviews when Alice explained that she would likely not read scholarly journals such as the *Journal of Research in Music Education*. "Yeah, I'm not going to read that. I wouldn't even know how to get to it. I am more of a

practical reader,” she explained. Alice’s statement about access to journals is an important finding to note. It is entirely possible that teachers in schools do not have access to journals in which revisionist thought is often published, likely hindering their ability to interact with these ideas and perpetuating the belief that discussions of this type are merely discussions among academics with little value for teachers in the field. In response to the two stimulus articles, Alice also aligned herself with the traditionalist article written by Lautzenheiser and expressed a preference for trade journals such as *The Instrumentalist*, which she feels offer more practical advice for teachers.

Emergent Themes

Each interview transcript was analyzed and responses were categorized based on content. Upon continued analysis, categorizes that were similar in nature were combined into a single theme. This process of refinement continued until themes emerged that related to the participants’ (a) philosophy and beliefs related to teaching and classroom practices, (b) reactions to the stimulus articles and scholarly writing in general, (c) beliefs related to festivals/competitions, and (d) influential mentors and other individuals.

Philosophy and Beliefs Related to Classroom and Teaching Practices

The participants spoke with great conviction about the importance of their work and the value of band programs in music education. Alice spoke often of this point, saying “what a great field we’re in, in order to teach not only music, but life skills and music is the tool that you can use to teach them life skills.” Other participants echoed this statement with related responses about the sense of belonging band participation can provide and the ability to teach basic music skills through the group ensemble experience.

Responses varied widely when participants were asked to verbalize the main tenets of their own personal philosophies and beliefs that guide their practice. Alice immediately responded by saying, “love the kids, love the music, love what you do.” Susan went a little deeper by saying that her guiding philosophy was to create an atmosphere where students learn to appreciate each others’ differences and work as a team and, in the process, develop an appreciation for music.

Hopefully they’ll always love music and they’ll have a love for it and a joy for it ... They might still listen to rap after they leave. I’m sure they do. But I think they still can appreciate Holst and the other stuff too, and make them more well rounded people through music.

Jeff spoke of the importance of the aesthetic experience in his personal philosophy and said that as he gets older he realizes “the aesthetic part of music is absolutely why we do it,” but that it is much larger than that:

I think it’s my job to also give these kids a practical way of learning it (music) and doing it that is real and tangible and hooks them and gives them a way to take what they do and connect it other they things they do in life.

Jeff characterized his own beliefs as a hybrid of the praxial and aesthetic philosophies, saying that it was not possible to get the same experience from listening to music as you could making music, and that his job is to “give kids a chance to make music and experience it at the same time.”

Reaction to the Stimulus Articles or Scholarly Writing in General

As documented in the profiles of the participants, the teachers in this study overwhelmingly aligned themselves with the stimulus article reflecting traditional practices and largely dismissed the revisionist article. Responses to the revisionist article ranged from statements such as “it [the article] does not serve our profession at all” to “I didn’t get a whole lot out of it.”

These reactions to the revisionist article could be seen as part of a larger skepticism of academia in general. Whether this is entirely justified or not is beyond the scope of this investigation. The fact of the matter is that there were many instances during interviews of participants stating that the authors of the revisionist article were out of touch with current teaching practices in the schools. Susan said that if she could ask one question to the authors of the revisionist article, it would be “if they ever taught before and, if they had, I’d ask them how long it’s been” while Alice stated a fear of teachers at the university level that have completed their degree work with no secondary level teaching experience. These statements seem to reflect a lack of confidence in the qualifications of the authors and a general feeling of skepticism about the academic community at large.

Participants also questioned the motivation of writers of scholarly literature. Alice characterized scholarly writing as more of a necessity to achieve tenure than as a means of impacting practicing teachings in the schools. She said:

You’re always going to have your upper echelon people who are going to write articles because they’re the philosophy doctorate and they have to keep up to keep up their tenure at the university ... and that’s fine. I don’t read them.

Dialogue such as this suggests skepticism towards the academic community. It would appear that the divide between theory and practice which served as a basis for this study could be even deeper than originally considered in prior research (Brand, 1984, 2006; Byo, 1991; Hedden, 1979).

Beliefs Related to Festivals and Competitions

During my observations, all of the participants were preparing their ensembles for attendance at the state concert band festival, which likely served as a catalyst for this theme to emerge during interviews. Band competitions and other adjudicated events are traditional

aspects of band culture and all of the participants in this study mentioned the importance of attending these events with their students. Jeff believes that, “bands who don’t do that (attend adjudicated events) generally, I think, are missing an opportunity to get feedback from people who are in the top of the field.” Alice described the events as a “big deal,” and two of the participants described a sense of self-imposed pressure for their students to perform well at these festivals.

However, all three participants also made it clear that the focus of their attendance at events was not on winning. Alice said, “I never do care about the ratings. I care that they play their very best and that’s all that matters to me.” She continued by describing the process of preparing for a competitive event as more important than the end result by saying, “it’s not the competition that matters, it’s the getting there.” Jeff continued this line of thought and said that the concept of “beating another band” in terms of a numerical score is never mentioned in his classroom. He characterized this emphasis on winning as “immaturity” based on his prior experiences of being very competitive as a young teacher.

In the revisionist stimulus article, Allsup contends that competitiveness within the traditional band paradigm, both within the ensemble and in comparison to other groups, does not serve an educational experience. He writes, “first chair winners and last chair losers, numerical ratings, good years and bad years, statewide rankings: where is education in this compendium? What education function – beyond winning and losing – do these hierarchies and categories serve?” (Allsup & Benedict, 2008, p. 164). It would seem that while the participants universally believe in the importance of attendance at these events, there is at least a small bit of consideration towards a revisionist belief that an emphasis on winning and competition can be unhealthy. Jeff verbalized this belief quite well by saying, “when it’s all

about winning, what do you tell the kids when they don't win? You were unsuccessful. You're a failure. And that's just not the philosophy we want to have." This is quite similar to the Allsup quote mentioned previously. Again, the agreement here between Jeff and the revisionist article stands in stark contrast to the feelings of anger he experienced after reading it.

Influential Individuals and Mentors

Participants often mentioned their prior band directors at both the high school and college levels as having a significant impact on their approach to teaching, largely confirming the results of previous research suggesting that prior music teachers have a significant impact on a teacher's beliefs related to teaching (Bergee et al, 2001; Conway, 2002; Isbell, 2008). Comments such as, "I think I probably imitate [him] more than I know" were common. Susan spoke the most about this concept, describing her high school band experience as a place where she learned a great deal about how to create a successful program, "even though I didn't realize I was learning it at the time." It is likely that the participants reproduce some of these strategies from their former band directors whom they revere.

Two participants also spoke about the importance of seeking out successful people within the profession to learn strategies to improve as a teacher. Susan recounted her experiences of attending honor band clinics as a young teacher and observing the clinician working with the group as a way that she could learn new strategies. Jeff did the same and said that he felt fortunate that he had associations with more accomplished teachers to whom he could ask questions when he was just beginning his career.

Additional Perspectives

In addition to these documented emergent themes, other perspectives emerged that need further consideration.

First, it should be noted that the participants reflected an overall limited knowledge of music education philosophy in general. While Bennett Reimer and David Elliot certainly do not represent the full spectrum of music education philosophy, it was interesting that the only participant to mention Bennett Reimer or David Elliott when asked about his personal philosophy was Jeff, who was also the only one who had received a Master's degree in music education. Jeff offered an explanation for this:

Nobody knows who Bennett Reimer is. I bet if you ask 1,000 band directors who Bennett Reimer is, I'll bet you 900 of them have no clue. They've never even heard of him ... And, I would never had if had never went [*sic*] to grad school.

Neither of the other two participants made mention of noted music education philosophers when asked to articulate their individual philosophies. This finding is surprising considering the expansive growth of the field of music education philosophy in the last 20 years. One possible explanation is that both of these participants attended undergraduate training programs in the 1970s, just after the publication of Reimer's first edition of his *Philosophy of Music Education* and prior to its widespread acceptance. However, this alone cannot account for the overall unfamiliarity with the discipline of music education philosophy in general. Both Reimer and Elliott, arguably two of the most prominent current philosophical writers, do not exist solely in the pages of their seminal texts as both have published and received fairly frequent coverage in commonly encountered publications such as the *Music Educators Journal*, a publication included with MENC membership dues and easily accessible to teachers in the field.

This finding would seem to suggest that additional emphasis should be placed on music education philosophy in undergraduate curriculums. While it is acknowledged that undergraduate curriculums are already burdened to include all necessary coursework and

classes for licensure requirements, the lack of familiarity found in this study suggests a need for at least cursory coverage to this growing field to allow practicing teachers the knowledge necessary to engage with issues of this type.

Second, this lack of knowledge related to music education philosophy is potentially related to the sense of skepticism towards the larger academic community that was previously mentioned. Statements made by the participants suggest that they do not separate empirical research and philosophical writing; prior research and the current study suggest similar attitudes towards these modes of inquiry. Susan and Alice acknowledged philosophical writings in a somewhat negative manner as a way for university professors to “keep their tenure at the university” while Jeff expressed a concern that some research has “lost sight of the fact that fundamentally it’s (music education) about teaching kids in the schools how to be musicians.” If these participants are any indication, members of the academic community should recognize the perceived lack of relevance their work has among teachers and find ways to disseminate their writings in a manner that can overcome this skepticism. Specific to music education philosophy, writers should find a way to present their work in a manner that includes, rather than excludes, the secondary level teacher in the process and clearly articulate how issues the philosophical community grapples with are relevant to teachers in the field.

CONCLUSION

Although the methodology and small number of participants in this study do not lend the results to large-scale generalizations, I believe it provides some insight into an issue that is currently under-researched in the profession. The design of the study provides a starting point for understanding the receptiveness of a small sample of instrumental music teachers towards selected examples of philosophical literature. Having this foundational knowledge is necessary before future larger-scale research questions on this topic can be constructed with the advantages of full context and perspective.

The results of this study have been considered in terms of themes that emerged during analysis, many of which were related to the original five hypothesized contributing factors discussed in the literature review. These hypothesized contributing factors included (a) a strong adherence to tradition; (b) perceived impracticality of education methods; (c) cognitive dissonance experienced when presented with ideas that conflict with the beliefs of an individual; (d) inaccurate perception of current teaching practices; and (e) the polarizing discourse of the writings.

These five factors had some level of impact on receptiveness to the two dichotomous essays related to the construction of music curriculum, albeit to various degrees. First, in terms of a strong adherence to tradition, participants seemed to adhere to traditional methods of teaching and traditional conceptions of band instruction as manifested through observed rehearsal behaviors. This is consistent with previous research suggesting that teachers often resist change (Cohen, 2002), predominately use traditional methods of teaching (Weiss, 1997), and are bound by forces of tradition (Jorgensen, 2001). This is not to say that bad teaching was occurring, as a determination of that type was not part of this study. This is simply to say that

the observed behaviors predominately lined up with the traits identified as traditional (Lautzenheiser, 2004) more so than traits identified as revisionist (Allsup & Benedict, 2008).

Second, participants largely confirmed that teachers in the field perceive many tenets of revisionist thinking as impractical. A general consensus among participants related to the revisionist approach advocated in the Allsup and Benedict article was that the arguments presented were “out-of-touch” and not relevant to what they do as teachers in the classroom. Jeff noted a disconnect between revisionist writing and the day-to-day workings of school music programs, similar to the findings of Kacanek (1982) and Brand (1984) in relation to receptiveness of teachers to experimental research findings. The participants often said that they did not find articles of this type as helpful in the process of teaching young people, preferring articles that were more practical in nature from trade journals such as *The Instrumentalist*. The garage band in the classroom approach advocated by Allsup (Allsup & Benedict, 2008) drew particular ire from some participants as being impractical. Susan said, “I’m sorry, maybe some people can have a good band by having a garage band atmosphere, but I don’t know how you would learn *A Movement for Rosa* in a garage band.”

Third, cognitive dissonance was difficult to determine with absolute conviction based on interview transcripts. While there are ways to examine the discomfort associated with the phenomenon in a scientific manner, I was not equipped to do so in the present study. Nonetheless, the anger Jeff experienced upon reading the article and Susan’s determination that there was not a clear point contained in the revisionist article may point to attempts by Jeff and Susan to reduce dissonance by making the points of the article incomparable to one’s own and thereby reducing the validity of the article and making its arguments largely unfounded (Festinger, 1962).

Fourth, the results of the present study did not entirely support previous research indicating that teachers have difficulty perceiving their current teaching practices and teaching and learning situations in general (Brown & Darrow, 1987; Duke, 1987; Prickett, 1987). I found that beliefs reported in interviews by the participants were verified through observation fieldnotes. For example, when asked how to describe his own teaching style, Jeff said that he tries to “always have all the kids thinking about the musical concepts that are going on” and rarely stops the band to correct something without asking them to analyze why he stopped. My observations show that Jeff correctly assessed his own teaching practices. There were many instances where he asked the students directly for advice on a performance problem and did not presume that he was the only one with the correct answer. In one exchange with a student who was having difficulty performing a rhythm correctly, Jeff asked the student, “How are you counting this? What’s going on in your head here?” The student responded that he was counting the main beats, to which Jeff suggested that he count the subdivision as well. The point to be made here is that Jeff was interested in knowing how the student was thinking about the musical concept prior to offering any suggestions.

Susan mentioned that she believed in having good discipline when rehearsing, but that she did not expect students to be “soldiers” and “sit stiff” all the time. She also said, “I want them to be free to express themselves, and sometimes it’s good to laugh in rehearsal...but I don’t like the chitter-chatter and all that.” Indeed, Susan’s band rehearsed with good discipline throughout the two classes I observed. The students remained on-task as they worked on their performance repertoire, but there were also many lighter moments in which all shared a laugh. Students asked questions at any time they felt the need to do so, and Susan never projected a feeling of annoyance at these requests.

Alice expressed a desire to be positive and spoke many times of her positive approach to teaching; however, there were instances of negativity found during the observations. Alice admitted as such by telling me, “what you saw was not good,” and that she was unhappy with the degree of anger that she has exhibited in her teaching this school year. As with the others, Alice was able to acknowledge a behavior in her teaching (in this case, a negative one) that was observable through fieldnotes.

While this finding seemingly conflicts with previous research suggesting teachers struggle with the ability to accurately perceive their own teaching (Brown & Darrow, 1987; Duke, 1987; Prickett, 1987), this finding is in need of additional research before comparisons to past literature can be made. In the cited studies, teachers and students participated in tasks such as self-observation, reflection, and rating of themselves or others within a highly specific and controlled environment, often with specific competencies being highlighted for investigation. No such specialization was created or desired in the present study as participants were asked to speak of their perceptions of themselves in a general manner with verification sought through observations and recorded via fieldnotes. This method is obviously different from those in the above-cited studies, as the creation of a controlled environment was not a goal of this research. Of interest in the present study was the interaction of the participants within their natural environment and how they perceived themselves, using their own terminology, within that environment. When conceived in that manner, it would be appropriate to say that, in general, the participants accurately identified many aspects of their teaching practices, although comparisons to prior research are likely not appropriate.

Fifth, the effect of polarizing language on the receptiveness of the participants to the revisionist philosophical stimulus article was perhaps most universally expressed of the five

hypothesized contributing factors. Most importantly, the participants were offended by the “antagonistic tone” in the revisionist article and felt that it was belittling towards them and their work. This is one compelling characteristic representative of the divide existing between theory and practice in music education.

Although the concept of theory and practice in music education as existing in dialectic (Jorgensen, 2001) was discussed in a previous section, it seems worthy of being revisited in light of the importance of this finding. Jorgensen’s concept of dialectic implies tension in the interaction between theoretical ideas and common practice that, while retaining their separateness, are integrally related. As a means to work through such tensions, Jorgensen advocates a dialogical approach in which a free and open exchange of ideas and opinions between theorists and practitioners serves to alleviate such dilemmas. While the participants’ comments about the revisionist stimulus article presents a need for dialogue between both parties, there appears to be more negativity than congeniality in the current discussion. As Jorgensen says, “when one sees the other’s position as evil and destructive, and moral claims outweigh one’s willingness to grant the other’s perspective credence, the conversation may cease” (p. 349).

The reasons for this lack of willingness to engage with the other side of the conversation are difficult to ascertain. It is entirely possible that philosophical writers such as Allsup and Benedict make provocative arguments because that is the nature of philosophical discussion. Philosophers often make bold declamatory statements and then respond to questions from others in the philosophical community as a means to defend and extend their beliefs. However, music education philosophers should be mindful that teachers in schools are not necessarily fellow philosophers. While they are certainly as capable as any philosopher to

engage in critical thinking, these teachers are not philosophers and are not apt to engage in a verbal jousting match as is common in the philosophical community. As a result, the lack of engagement between both sides prevents a dialogical approach to bridging this gap. The dynamic of this relationship and the inability to freely exchange ideas between theorists and practitioners likely contributes to the perception of an “ivory tower” in which the academic community is thought to reside by some practitioners in the schools.

The results of this study suggest that music education philosophers must be open to toning down their rhetoric if they want their ideas to be considered by teachers in schools. Jorgensen (2001) argues that this engagement between teachers and the academic community is vital:

Such dispositions of thought developed within an ongoing dialogue in and between scholarly and practical communities, and softening the boundaries between theory and practice, are essential to music education. Without them, the field suffers not only in terms of the rigor of its theoretical framework but in the validity of its practice (p. 352).

Ideally, both sides would be willing to compromise at least slightly in order to foster an atmosphere of open communication. Teachers in the schools must also be willing to rise above their comfort zone and engage in this dialogue, although this may be impossible if teachers never encounter these ideas in the first place. Minimizing the use of inflammatory language, being mindful of one’s tone, and being willing to see the value in others’ views would be helpful in shifting the nature of this conversation towards a more dialogical approach.

Further evidence of the need to minimize inflammatory rhetoric lies in the fact that the revisionist writing by the first author was considered by at least two of the participants as more thoughtful, less negative, and genuine in purpose. Susan said she felt this author “wasn’t quite so negative” as compared to the sections written by the second author. Jeff went so far as to say, “everything that I thought was good from the article was pretty much written by [the first

author],” and that the author “raised a few good questions, talked about a few good things... I think that [the author] obviously is thinking about [and] is genuine in the thought of what can we do to really make this work better for everyone else.”

This difference in tone is subtle, but noticeable. For example, when discussing band instruction, the first author says, “nor can I claim that I have been the perfect teacher-director, always able to find the right balance in matters of education and performance” (p. 165) and concedes that some traditional approaches to band “can be highly creative or passionate” (p. 160). While the author continues to advance a position that is aligned with revisionist practices throughout this document, a sense of vulnerability is revealed in these quotes and an aggressive attack of the traditional side is avoided. However, statements made by the second author that “we do not ask our students to think” (p. 164) or traditional classrooms demonstrate a relationship between “oppressor and oppressed” (p. 170) do not seem to provide the same level of consideration or compassion.

This recognition of a difference in negativity and the use of polarizing language in the portions of the stimulus article written by the first author compared to those written by the second author by the participants is an interesting finding. Not only does this support the idea that polarizing language negatively impacts the receptiveness of people to examples of revisionist writing, it also suggests that there may be at least a marginal increase in receptiveness to revisionist writings if they are presented in a more collegial fashion.

It should be noted that the time of the year in which this study was completed likely had an impact on the observations that were conducted. In all instances, the participants were preparing their ensembles to attend the state adjudicated concert band festival during the time period in which observations were being completed. In some instances, the observations that

were made occurred during the final class meeting of the ensemble prior to attending the festival. A state level concert band festival is a traditional rite of passage for many high school bands and one that requires precision and accuracy in order to do well, and rightfully so. While I feel that the assessment made in the analysis section that the participants taught their classes in a more or less traditional manner remains valid, the degree to which this traditional approach was employed was likely magnified based on this impending performance at the state concert band festival. Additionally, in all cases, the students in the ensemble were returning to their classes after a ten-day holiday break during my first set of observations. In one instance, the ensemble had just returned from a performance trip to Florida two days prior to the first observation, and the students and teacher were possibly more tired than usual as a result. All of these factors may have had an impact on results. Future research utilizing similar methods should complete a greater number of observations and spread those observations out over a longer period of time to minimize the effect of these external conditions on the observation data. Additionally, the degree to which time of year and performance obligations affect the teaching style of secondary level teachers is a topic worthy of additional research.

After spending time observing the participants of this study and an even greater amount of time reading articles reflecting revisionist thought, I believe that a clarification needs to be made. There is a tendency among some revisionist writers to characterize traditional teaching methods as all the same; words such as “thoughtless” or “oppressive” are sometimes used to describe a classroom situation in which the teacher is in direct control and students are given directions with which they must comply. I would argue that this description, while sometimes accurate, is not entirely descriptive of all traditional teaching methods; it is more descriptive of just poor teaching. This is a distinction that is often lacking in discussions related to this topic.

The participants that I observed did in fact teach in a manner that was more aligned with what could be considered a traditional style; however, the assessment that they were totalitarian and solely interested in maintaining power and control over the classroom situation is not fair. This may explain why the polarizing language of the revisionist stimulus article had such a great effect on their receptiveness. These participants take what they do very seriously and all of them spoke of the importance of creating an atmosphere that was positive, inviting, and gave the students a safe place where they could belong. These participants might be open to new ideas if presented in a manner they did not perceive as belittling their efforts and attacking the tradition that they value so dearly. Future writings should give some consideration to tradition that is done well and make a clear distinction between poor teaching and traditional teaching.

This brings us to an idea that Fonder (2009) presented in which he spoke of a “middle ground” between these extreme viewpoints on either side. Perhaps this is merely a reflection of the nation’s political polarization, but finding true middle ground between these viewpoints continues to prove difficult. Although quoted earlier, the statement by Brand (1984) that, “there has been a failure of both the researcher and the teacher to understand one another and to foster positive and cooperative relationships” (p. 2) seems more pertinent now in light of these findings. Academic writers at the university level must be willing to change the tone of the discussion and involve secondary level music teachers in the conversation to make philosophy more relevant to all. At the same time, secondary level teachers should be willing to approach these topics with an open mind and not immediately discount the intentions and validity of the writing. Some might argue that music education philosophy discussions intentionally occur at the university level, as that is the most appropriate community to debate and evaluate issues of this type. However, the results of this study suggest that this belief mistakenly undervalues the

ability of secondary level teachers to wrestle with these issues and offer valuable viewpoints. Although the profession is vast in its size and diversity, the process of determining what one values is beneficial to all practitioners, no matter what area or level they teach.

All participants acknowledged in interviews that, although they might not regularly read philosophical articles, they believe some philosophical writers do have good ideas. Is it possible to take the best aspects of traditional teaching and the best ideas from revisionist literature and create a hybrid approach? That question remains to be answered. Future writing is needed to articulate what that approach might look like in a classroom.

This study was designed as an initial step in bridging a gap that exists in the research literature. Future research might replicate the methodology of this study but use additional philosophical essays that represent differing views from the ones chosen in this study. Additional options for future research might isolate other variables such as highest degree obtained, type of employing school, differing grade levels taught, or years of teaching experience in relation to receptiveness, in addition to expanding the participant pool to include music educators from other areas beside band. All research in this area could be useful to create an atmosphere that facilitates closer communication between researchers, philosophers, and teachers. A stronger coalition between these parties would only serve to benefit instrumental music education and close a divide that still persists.

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APPENDIX A

ARTICLE PREFERENCE SURVEY

Directions: Please read the title of each article listed below. Keep in mind that all of the articles are from music education journals. Then take a moment and reflect on how likely it is that you would read that article if you encountered it while leisurely browsing a periodical. Circle the number under the article title that best matches that likelihood. Please use the following scale:

5 = I would read this article

4 = I might read this article

3 = I don't know if I would read this article

2 = I would probably not read this article

1 = I would not read this article

1. Rethinking music: First steps to a new philosophy of music education

1 2 3 4 5

2. Preserving music education in the 21st Century

1 2 3 4 5

3. Cultivating young directors to preserve the profession

1 2 3 4 5

4. The impact of informal music learning practices in a classroom, or how I learned how to teach from a garage band

1 2 3 4 5

5. No wasted moments: Planning purposeful transitions

1 2 3 4 5

6. Reflections on futures for music education philosophy

1 2 3 4 5

7. The rehearsal: Mastery of music fundamentals

1 2 3 4 5

8. Curriculum reform: Reclaiming “music” as social praxis

1 2 3 4 5

9. Factors contributing to junior high music student success at solo and ensemble festivals

1 2 3 4 5

10. Programming the perfect concert

1 2 3 4 5

11. Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance (CMP) in the lived experiences of students

1 2 3 4 5

12. Exploring the contexts of informal learning

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B

GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

I. Informed Consent:

Although participants will be informed as to the content of the research upon agreement to participate, the goals of the study will be reiterated before beginning the interview. The following statement will be made to all participants:

“Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. As you have been made aware, I am interested in learning more about the opinions of music teachers and the aspects of teaching that they value. As someone who has been successful for many years in this profession, you are in a great position to speak to me about these issues. I will hold all your responses in confidence and nothing you say will be identified with you personally in the final report. During the course of the interview, if you have any questions, please feel free to ask. Do you have any questions before we begin?”

II. Background descriptive questions:

- Questions about current school and teaching assignment
- Number of students in the total program
- How are classes organized and why
- Number of years at current teaching assignment
- Previous teaching experience

III. Instruction Questions:

- How would you describe your teaching style?
- What is your schedule like on a daily basis?
- Who has influenced you as a teacher?
- Could you identify a person or group of persons that has influenced your own perception of how to teach?
- What comparisons could you make from the experiences of your first year of teaching to those of the average first year teacher?
- How much time do you have to devote to professional development and refinement of your teaching?
- Is professional development important?
- If answers reflect a lack of time, ask about time demands imposed by nature of job.
- How do you motivate? How do you foster internal motivation?
- How is jazz band or chamber music present in your program? Do you view these experiences as being fundamentally different than the large band?
- How do you select music?

IV. Article Discussion Questions

This section will rely on the freedom associated with the semi-structured interview. Questions will be asked related to the two readings, but the interviewer will remain free to create additional probes based on the responses from participants.

- Tell me your initial responses to the “The Problem of Band” article
- If you could respond to the authors, what would you say?

- Tell me your initial responses to the “Why Band? Why Music?” article.
- If you could respond to the author, what would you say?
- Imagine you are paging through a journal and you encounter both of these articles. What would your reaction likely be?

V. Self-Selected Survey Questions

Questions will be asked related to articles selected as likely or not likely to be read from the survey. These questions will be dependent on the responses provided by the participants on their form. The intent will be to understand why the participant made the selections that they did.

VI. Philosophical Questions

- How relevant are discussions of music education philosophy to you?
- Do you have a personal philosophy of music education that guides the teaching that you do? If so, what are its main tenets?
- Do you engage in self-reflective practice?

VII. Closing Questions:

- What about your teaching has changed over the course of your career?
- What are your future plans?
- Anything else I haven't covered?

APPENDIX C INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.6792
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

-- Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at <http://www.lsu.edu/screeningmembers.shtml>

-- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

- (A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru E.
- (B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
- (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
- (D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
- (E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://php.nhtaining.com/users/login.php>.)
- (F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://www.lsu.edu/irb/IRB%20Security%20of%20Data.pdf>)

1) Principal Investigator: Robert Neil Nelson Rank: Graduate Student
Dept: Music Ph: 225-892-3826 E-mail: rnels13@tigers.lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each

James Byo
Professor
School of Music
(225) 578-2593
jbyo@lsu.edu

IRB# <u>E5478</u>	LSU Proposal # _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Complete Application
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Human Subjects Training

3) Project Title: An Exploration of Secondary Level Music Educators' Receptiveness to Select Philosophical Writings.

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 4-14-2014

4) Proposal? (yes or no) No If Yes, LSU Proposal Number _____

Also, if YES, either
☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
OR
☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students) Current High School Band Teachers

*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the ages, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature Robert Neil Nelson Date 4/6/11 (no per signatures)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Exempted _____ Category/Paragraph <u>2</u>		
Reviewer <u>Mathews</u>	Signature <u>Robert Mathews</u>	Date <u>4/15/11</u>

Consent Form

1. Study Title: An Exploration of Secondary Level Music Educators' Receptiveness To Select Philosophical Writings
2. Performance Site: The classrooms of the participants
3. Investigators: The following investigator is available for questions about this study:
Neil Nelson
rnels13@tigers.lsu.edu (email) 225-892-3826 (phone)
4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions held by secondary level instrumental music educators towards scholarly writings about philosophy and band curriculum
5. Subject Inclusion: Individuals who are currently high school band directors
6. Number of Subjects: 3
7. Study Procedures: Participants will complete a survey measuring their willingness to read various articles related to philosophy and curriculum. Participants will also be observed in their normal teaching situation and read two stimulus articles related to the purpose of the study. Following this reading, participants will engage in an interview with the investigator.
8. Benefits: There are no financial benefits associated with participation. However, information gained may be valuable to the profession at large.
9. Risks: There are no risks associated with participation in this study.
10. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.
11. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.
12. Signatures

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Matthews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature: _____

Date: _____



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Exemption Expires: 4-14-2014

VITA

Robert Neil Nelson is a native of Mebane, North Carolina. He attended Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, graduating with a bachelor of music in music education (*magna cum laude*) in 2005. Upon graduating, he spent four years as a high school band director in the public schools of North Carolina. He enrolled at Louisiana State University in 2009 as a graduate assistant within the music education degree program. His responsibilities at Louisiana State included student teaching supervision, teaching undergraduate methods courses, and assisting the faculty to ensure the success of the music education program. Mr. Nelson completed his studies at Louisiana State in 2011, earning a Master's degree in music – concentration in music education. He currently resides in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and continues to pursue performing and teaching opportunities as a classically trained clarinetist, conductor, and teacher.